

A Moving Tale August 3



The FANX complex about 1980, the earliest photo of it in our collection. FANX II is the double-jointed building in the center.

In late 1969, Paul Derthick, a staff officer in what was then called “A Group,” the office for the Soviet problem at NSA, shared his memories of a 1968 move from NSA headquarters on Fort Meade to the new building, FANX II, at the Friendship Airport Annex.

The decision on which offices were to make the move came out in January 1968, and the subsequent period was not well-handled. Employees in the offices affected were worried about transportation --- car pools, parking, lack of public bus service,* and additional driving distances. The move managers did not do a very good job in providing this information. In his recollections, Derthick unhelpfully compared it to being “in Ceylon when stuck with a badly mangled ten-rupee note that no one would accept,” or being singled out for “permanent KP.”

Within a few months, however, the situation had greatly improved and Derthick remembered that “those who staffed the move are deserving of the highest praise.” The necessary information about the FANX situation was forthcoming, and, even if some employees disliked what they heard, at least they were able to make decisions based on fact, not rumor.

In what must sound like fiction today, those who moved to FANX II found better parking than they had had at Fort Meade. Regular bus service was available, although it was not as flexible as at headquarters. Shuttle buses between FANX and Fort Meade were as “as precise as the moon-orbiting Apollos.”

Those who moved found their offices larger and better lighted than they were used to. Derthick noted that some employees found the narrow hallways

inconvenient, but he thought this was a plus --- the narrowness discouraged loitering and prevented crowds gathering around vending machines.

In sum, the move was mishandled at the beginning of the process, but the end result satisfied at least one person, who was moved to write an article about it.

* NSA's headquarters at Fort Meade was then served by commuter bus service several times a day, not just at the beginning and end of the day shift.

Author Name: This article is adapted from one written by Paul Derthick. He is well known for creating and sustaining *The Headline Puzzle*, a recurring feature in the *NSA Newsletter*, and has been continued in electronic form by his successors. The reference to Ceylon and a ten-rupee note? During World War II, Derthick worked against Japanese cryptosystems in the China-Burma-India Theater of War. He may have been re-living a personal trauma.

502 caption: an aerial view showing all three buildings in the FANX complex.